

These are always very difficult questions, and I have learned long ago never to judge the research by the title of the proposal. These are complex issues, and I don't know if the gentleman was here earlier when I spoke about the rate of return on research at the National Science Foundation. The best estimate is that the rate of return is a minimum of 20 percent and a maximum 400 percent on individual research projects.

□ 2030

Now, I challenge anyone in this Chamber to find investments that will year after year give you that rate of return on the investment.

Another point I would like to make is, as I said, you can't always judge the full proposal by the title. This was evident a few years ago when we went through exactly the same charade when discussing the National Science Foundation budget. Some of my colleagues came down to the floor to amend the NSF appropriations bill, and one offered an amendment to remove grants for the study of ATM. This person gave a magnificent speech why we should not spend money at the National Science Foundation or the Department of Energy to study ATM. His argument was, let the banking industry do the research on ATMs. What he didn't know is that the proposal was not on automatic teller machines but the proposal was on studying asynchronous transfer modes, which involves the way computers talk to each other. This research led to a substantial change in the speed at which computers were able to talk to each other. This is a good example of why it is dangerous to just look at titles and make a judgment.

I would also pick up on the comment of Mr. BAIRD about cultural studies. I think one of the basic problems in Iraq, and I have told this to people in the White House, is that there were not enough people in the White House, perhaps even in the State Department, who understood the culture of the countries we were dealing with, and we failed to realize what would happen once we moved into that country. A good NSF-funded study beforehand would have been invaluable in determining what would happen.

Another example: a few years ago there was a grant on game theory. Once again, one of our colleagues rushed to the floor and said we have to eliminate funding for that. In fact, game theory is extremely useful in calculating the operation of nuclear reactors.

So I urge defeat of this amendment. It is very easy to sit on the House floor and pontificate about these issues. But if we are going to cut the budget, there are much more fertile fields in which to cut. Why would we cut the one agency that gives us a guaranteed rate of return on our investment when there are many other areas we can cut where we are getting little or no payback at all?

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the last word.

I appreciate the comments of my good friend from Michigan, and I appreciate the comments of my fellow colleague from Washington. And I have been, as a physician, a strong supporter of the National Science Foundation. I believe strongly that, in fact, they need more money, not less. I would argue that we need to prioritize appropriately in our Federal budget and provide much greater resources in the National Science Foundation and the National Institutes of Health and the CDC and others that ultimately work and derive huge benefit to our entire society and, in fact, to the world.

But I commend my good friend from California for bringing this amendment forward because, although I may not have pulled out a couple of the items that he notes, for the life of me, I have a difficult time understanding and appreciating why on earth it would make any sense, and I would ask my good friend from Washington can you fathom how studying bison hunting on the Late Prehistoric Great Plains might have some effect on contemporary society that would make a difference with the compelling argument that you made regarding the study of cross-cultural emotions?

Mr. BAIRD. Mr. Chairman, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. I would be happy to yield.

Mr. BAIRD. Mr. Chairman, I thank very much the gentleman for yielding. And I would just caution I wouldn't state "for the life of me" on something that I hadn't studied very well no matter how obvious it may look.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. I would be happy to reclaim my time or I would be happy to have you answer the question, one or the other.

Mr. BAIRD. I could answer the question. I am just giving you the caveat about staking your life on things.

Here is the issue: I don't think we want to say that we should never study the history of things. It is the perspective of this gentleman that we should not study history. And particularly, when you look at bison, I am not an expert in this, but to pretend to be so would be a mistake. To pretend to be so on your side or on my side would be a mistake. The authors of this study have contended that biologists and social scientists have tried to look at how humans make decisions to maximize and minimize risks in different environmental conditions. As you face different food supply systems, how do you deal with that? And that is part of the point here. How did people who live on the plains look at where they were going to harvest bison?

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Reclaiming my time, Mr. Chairman, I would suggest candidly that it was a valiant attempt. It was truly a valiant attempt, and I appreciate the attempt, to make a justification for bison hunting on the Late Prehistoric Great Plains. I would

also suggest that the sexual politics of waste in Dakar, Senegal is a questionable study.

So I commend my good friend from California, and I would be happy to yield to him.

Mr. CAMPBELL of California. Mr. Chairman, I thank the gentleman from Georgia for yielding.

I appreciate the academic arguments, and I understand them. I am a history buff myself. I love this stuff. I might actually love this report, might enjoy reading it, might find it fascinating. That's not the point. The point is do we want to spend taxpayer funds on this?

The United States taxpayer cannot fund every bit of academic research for every university, for everything that every professor wants to do across this country. We can't do that. The question before us is, are these the sorts of things we do want to spend taxpayer money on? I would suggest that they are not, and that is why I would suggest that to vote against this amendment is to say that you believe that taxpayer money should be spent on these specific items. That is the question before us. Not whether it is interesting. I am a Civil War buff. I love all kinds of interesting stuff about that, but I don't think the taxpayer ought to pay for research into it.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Mr. Chairman, reclaiming my time, I thank the gentleman for his comments, and I would concur. I think that there are many things that are exciting and interesting to study, whether or not they ought to be priorities at this point, and again, I would point to the bison hunting on the Late Prehistoric Great Plains.

And if my good friend from Michigan would care to make a comment, I would be pleased to yield.

Mr. EHLERS. Mr. Chairman, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

I just want to respond to the statement that we can't fund every proposal that comes along, and that is absolutely true. The National Science Foundation funds a small fraction of the proposals that come through, and that is why we are beginning to slip as a Nation compared to other nations, because we are simply not, as a Congress, providing sufficient funds for the National Science Foundation. And I forget the current figure, but I think it is in the neighborhood of 20 percent of the grant applications are being funded; 80 percent are not being funded. It's a tough business, and these are all peer-reviewed grants. I cannot defend them individually without looking at them. As I say, you can't judge a proposal or a grant by its cover.

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the last word.

I rise in opposition to the amendment, and I yield to the gentleman from Washington.

Mr. BAIRD. Mr. Chairman, I thank the gentleman from Virginia for yielding.

The challenge here, my friends, is you asked, I think, a question that is